Mr. Oliver Stone (please forward, if necessary)
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2/8/91

Dear Mr. Stone,

Beginning with the first reports of your interest in the Ricky White fabrications that are so obvious, I've been troubled by all the rumors about what you plan. Among the other items in today's mail is a clipping from the Los Angeles Sunday Times of the third. I presume it is accurate in stating that what the Hollywood Reporter describes as your "Project for 1991" is "based on Jim Garrison's conspiracy theories."

You need not agree with me, of course, and you have every right to play Mack Sennett in a Keystone Kops Pink Panther, but I believe that the assassination of any President is, whatever the intent, a de facto coup d'etat. And that on any such subject, if what remains of representative society is to have any health and any opportunity to function as in theory it must for freedom to be real, the people must be truthfully and accurately informed.

Perhaps based on a longer and different life than yours and what I've seen, experienced and been part of it, perhaps because I am the first member of my family <u>ever</u> to be born into freedom, this means more to me than it does to you. You may think that I exaggerate. But if you do, please think back to that day that turned the entire world around and compare this country and the world of today with that day, including by comparing our political leadership on all levels and our economic health and state.

If as I hope you take time from what must be a busy day to think about what I say it should be apparent that I have and can have no selfish purpose. I have no theories to sell and from my knowledge of and experience in publishing and from your reputation it is apparent that there is no commercial interest in truth and fact and there is in theories.

I do, of course regret this because it was a coup d'etat and because without it all the awful and evil things that ensued might not have, I have substantial reason to believe would not have.

I feel so strongly, assuming as I have no reason not to, that you are a man of good intentions, that I do so when for the first time in years it has become possible for me to resume my own writing, having been provided with part-time help without which I have no access to my own extensive records because of the state of my health and the limitations it imposes on me.

In April, I hope, I'll be 78. For the past 15 years I've been of limited mobility (despite which I was able to compel the government to disgorge about a third of a million pages of previously-withheld records relating to the investigations of the JFK and King assassinations investigations) and now, 14 months after open-heart and triple bypass operations, am under doctors' orders not to lift more than 15 pounds. As you can see from my typing, I must even keep my legs elevated when I'm sitting. Sideways typing is not easy or pleasant. In

event, I've gone most of the miles in which, as Frost said, we have promises to keep and continuing to try to keep those promises means something to me. Thus I write you, for myself, and in the hope that you, too, recognize that all who can do have promises with which they were born to keep.

I knew Jim Garrison very well. I spent as much time in New Orleans during his non-stop Mardi Gras euphemistically known there as his "probe" as I could afford. My interest was not in Clay Shaw. It was in Oswald. Mistakenly I assumed that he had a case and that all the untoward things I could not help noticing were his way of fighting fire with fire. I am the one of the critics he asked to sit at the counsel table during the Shaw trial to be what he called his "Dealey Plaza expert." The New York Times, having been informed of this, actually reported that I was sitting there the day they started empanelling the jury. I wasn't. My absence began with an incredibly paranoic stupidity on his part that I'll go into if you would like. What he had done in Superior Court in Washington, when with his staff counsel, Nouma Bertel, I was sitting at the counsel table, led me to phone New Orleans, tell them all to go to hell, and then to cancel my reservation. Several of his staff, of whom I remember Andrew "Moo" Sciambra, phoned me to assure me that Jim had been away and had not done what was so terribly sick, and that all was as I had been assured it was.

I believed them, went there, spent the Sunday afternoon before the beginning of the last act of the fiasco with Al Oser and the other lawyer who handled most of the in-court work, and when they broke it off at about 5 p.m, I told them they would lose and deserved to lose. It was then that for the first time I learned what the alleged case was.

One of the reports I got is that you hired Bud Fensterwald and his Dallas branch of a nuttery to be your experts. But is one of the nicest guys I know. I consider him a friend, but I do not recall a single irrational theory, a single obvious impossibility, he did not fall in love with. Bud was there then. When he was told, as I'd said, that if they proceeded with the case as I'd heard it outlined I'd be on the noon plane for home that Thursday. Bud said to me, laughing, he knew I'd not be. I was. (Bud may also remember one of the innumerable insanities you can't begin to understand from his On the Trail of the Assassins, but whether or not he'll want to I can't say.)

I presume that is one of a number of incidents over which Jim does not love me. There are so many! And with those you regard as "experts" you likely can't have a glimmer. I have no reason now to believe that those of his then staff who are privy will want to be truthful with you if you should ask, but I can and if you ask will document what I say.

I have in mind a couple of Jim's rewritings of his own history. You should remember them from what should be title "On the Cloud."

Remember Jim's disappointment over what he said was Bill Boxley's waste of his limited funds by flying out to Alberquerque to be with him? Jim wrote that he sent him packing

back to New Orleans because his limited resources ought not be wasted. Before telling you what was really involved, because it began with me, I say without any hesitation that Jim's was in all particulars a very big lie. He did NOT send Boxley back to New Orleans, and I know because what really happened when they left Alberquerque was so laughed about in Jim's office. Jim took Boxley to Los Angeles with him and, rather than economizing on funds, they had a suite in the Century Plaza, if I recall the name of a then new and fancy hotel. When a package was delivered to Jim's door, Boxley grabbed it and rush into the bathroom, where he filled the tub with water and immersed the package. When he thought the bomb was deactivated he opened it. It held books, ruined!

What Boxley was really there for began about three o'clock that morning, when the phone in my motel room in New Orleans rang. It was Harv Morgan, who then had a top-rated talk show on KCBS. Harv, a former reporter, was a friend. I knew he'd not have traced me and phoned at that hour unless it was about something serious. So before I took the call I got my tape recorder and taped the call. I probably have the tape somewhere. He told me about a San Francisco MAFIA plot to kill Jim, partially confirmed. As soon as we finished speaking I phoned Louis Ivon, then Jim's chief investigator. I hated to have to do that because in addition to having to work overtime on all varieties of childish foolishness he had exams. He was also in college getting a degree in criminology. Ivon picked me up in about a half hour, having first phoned others on the staff. I remember JIM Alcock was in the office by the time we got there and I am certain others also were. They listened to the tape in private, took it seriously, and of the things I'd earlier suggested but would not do without an OK, they agreed I should phone the FBI. If you want, I'll send you the FBI's records on it.

The truth is so much better than Garrison's fabrication, aside from a congenital economy with truth, which characterizes all of his "probe" and this book, I can't understand why he bullshitted. But he has his own mind and his own tastes. The one not unreasonable explanation I can think of is that if he told the truth he could not avoid me, as he did throughout the book.

(Last I heard of Harv, he was disenchanted about the subject, perhaps about more, and was teaching at San Francisco State. He may have some recollection of this and what may trigger it is "Purple Mushroom," the name of the joint where I think there was the first knowledge of the alleged plot.)

Then there is the part of the book where Jim talks about firing Boxley because Boxley was a CIA spy out to ruin him. In fact he didn't fire Boxley. Boxley quit rather than return to New Orleans to confront me. This is how it happened and what it really was.

In October, 1968, when Bud heard I was going to the west coast for a couple of speeches, he asked me to stop off in New Orleans on my way back and give him my impression of what Jim was doing. For this he gave me a $100 travellers check! Anyway, I did. Even though I was anxious to get home because four of my front teeth were loosened.

Earlier I'd been warning Garrison and his staff that a manuscript that had been given to them was a fake. But Jim loved it and believed it. So much that he suggested to the representative of the French SDECE, which actually produced that fake, to change the title from "L'Amerique Brule" to "Farewell America." When I got to New Orleans, and it was the day fate inflicted Nixon on us, Ivon gave me an OK to give some of it to a man I knew because his boss was allegedly in the assassination conspiracy. So I phoned H.L.Hunt's office and spoke to Paul Rothermel and told him about it. He told me that there would be a ticket for me at the Delta counter at Moissant airport and to go, at Love field, to the statue of the Texas ranger, where I'd be picked up and taken to the hotel room that was already reserved in my name. I accepted only the ticket because I went with the British reporter, John Pilger, to help with an anniversary piece he was in this country to write, and with my friend Matt Herron, who was his photographer.

Just before I was to return home Jim phoned me from New Orleans and insisted that I had to return there because he had made an amazing and very significant discovery he wanted to go into with me. So I did, and as Matt Herron may remember, because he met my plane and I stayed with him, my luggage was intercepted. Matt took me to a Palais Royal so I could get a few clean items of clothing. Last I heard Matt also was in California, at Sausalito. Boy was it a big discovery! (Also there was Charles Hall Steele, then a Marine, who had distributed literature with Oswald at the old Trade Mart building. Why Jim had Steele there I do not know because all he asked was the same questions the Warren Commission asked. (I later questioned Steele, in that office, and learned from him that what I had learned from Jesse Core was true, that Oswald had another helper in addition to Steele.))

Jim had this big sensation as an outgrowth of my asking Sciambra to ask the parents of the former WDSU photographer, Johann Rush, to search what he'd left with them at Shreveport when he moved to the Bay area to see if he had made prints of the stills of his motion pictures duplicating those he'd given the Secret Service. They told Moo how to reach Rush and Moo phoned that other demon investigator, Bill Turner, and Turner went to see Rush. He got no stills, he spent all his time telling Rush all about his FBI career, and he left with a print of the WDSU footage it had refused to let Jim have. When they started showing it and it was so poor a print I suggested that they look instead at mine because WDSU had let me have their file copy duplicated, with their reservation that I not give it to Jim. But they had a print so I felt it was OK to use mine.

Garrison provided a narration, pointing to a man he said was Shaw, and who wasn't, and then to a door past which the man walked. That door was, Jim, exclaimed, Shaw's secret entrance. This was the big thing he'd had me return to New Orleans for! If he had any explanation of Shaw's need for a secret entrance, on the main street yet, I do not remember it. What I do remember is that as usual, once he dreamed something up, he didn't bother to have it checked. Once he had any dream it became reality. (That door could

from the inside, ~~only~~. Some secret entrance!)

Just before leaving for the airport I learned from Ivon and Sciambra that Jim and Boxley had concocted the most outlandish of their innumerable theories and that they had not been able to talk him out of it. They asked me to try. I asked Ivon for two sets of what are incorrectly known as "the tramp pictures" and two envelopes for them. I mailed each to someone I trusted in Dallas and got identical reports from two independent investigations. Jim was about to charge one of more of those men in one of his countless conspiracies, on the day of the anniversary then getting close. They were not tramps, they were winos, they were not at the scene of the crime but were on a parked boxcar three blocks away, one to the west and two to the south.Etc.

Jim was big on a fink, Nancy Perrin Rich. His coming commenoration of the assassination featured this Perrin as the assassin on the Grassy Knoll. And Boxley had built a case of a secret communications center in an apartment house owned by a man really named Khruschevsky. (Perrin had killed himself in New Orleans.)

So, I flew home, saw my dentist, saved my teeth and returned to New Orleans. As I thought about the real problem, how to convince Jim of anything one he had dreamed one of his dreams, I decided that if it takes a crook to catch a crook, it could take a nut to reach a nut.I therefore phoned Vince Salandria, who lives in Philadelphia and was as devoted to Jim as Jim was to him. I told him Jim was about to get into real trouble over Boxley, and would be please go there with me, so he could persuade Jim after I dug the truth up. He did and we both stayed with Matt Herron. Vince is a conspiracy buff, paranoid, so it was easy to make him suspicious of Boxley. The grim reality is that Boxley also was devoted to Jim and he simply went out and made up the "proof" of Jim's dreams.

Ivon and his investigators went out and got me the things I asked for, like the morgue book, which is not loose-leaf and is handwritten; they made a real investigation of that communications apartment and found that instead of communications equipment that had been abandonned there, it had been empty beer cans. I can't remember all but whatever I asked they did. I have what I hope is a complete set of carbons of the report I gave Sciambra. Matt's typewriter was in bad shape and I had not taken my own supplies with me. I may not have all the carbons if I ran out of peper, etc., but I have more than enough to satisfy you.

All the time Salandria and Garrison were chatting at the New Orleans Athletic Club and other places, having assassination-fancy socials of one kind or another, and I'm sure they both enjoyed it.

It was on a Saturday that I gave Moo my report. I know he read it immediately and I think Ivon and perhaps others did. Moo was tickled. He said he and Vince and others were to meet with Jim for breakfast the next day, and would I like to wait in the office and do my own work while they did? I drove the old souped-up Chevvy II that had been taken from some gangsters

and Von always loaned me (because nobody else would drive it) to the office, Moo let me in and Salandria went with him to the NOAC.

Several hours later, Moo phoned me, obviously excited.

"Hal! You did it! We are coming to get you and take you to the best Italian dinner you'll ever have!"

He and Salandria picked me up and as we were driving to Moo's home, where his wife's cooking was all he said it was, at one point he turned to me and exclaimed again, "Hal, you just saved Jim Garrison from being disbarred by the SUPreme Court of the UNIted States of AMERica!" His emphasis. The Shaw case was there.

This is an understated version of one of the most difficult things I've ever tried, saving Jim Garrison from Jim Garrison.

I have no reason to believe his staff was not as competent as the average DA's staff but they could not do the simplest things. I am sure this is because they had a pretty good idea of the utter irrationality and absurdity of what they were involved in and could see no way out.

Whatever the reason, they could not even use the phone book to get Washington addresses for serving subpoenaes. I had to do just that, get the addresses from the phone book and provide them.

I am talking about incredible, absolutely abnormal incompetence by men who were not, at least most of the time, in any way incompetent.

To put it bluntly, as an investigator Jim Garrison could not find pubic hair in an overworked and undercleaned whorehouse -at rush hour! The illustrations are endless.

With his contempt for truth and reality there is gross carelessness and ignorance of his own city, his own characters. He gives a first-person account of going up the stairs to Guy Banister's office-which was on the first floor. I think he also has the stairs where there were no stairs. This is not unusual when you are just cribbing, as he often did.

Second-hand, through Ted Gandolfo, Jim made a big thing of getting a copy of On The Trail to me. I must have had a dozen calls from Gandolfo. Jim wanted me to have one of the first copies. Ted was getting 20 and Jim insisted I get one if the first. His wife had forgotten to place it in the mail. Many such. And no book came. I didn't care that much about it, having lived throug what I had, but then Prof. David Wrone, co-author of the only professional bibliography in the field, sent me a copy and asked me to annotate it. Be my guest! Ask him to make a copy and send it to you. And then if you have any questions by all means ask away. But if you do not do something like this before you do anything on your big project, I am sure you'll be sorry even if you make a fortune.

And among serious-minded people who do care about their history and their country and likely in colleges and universities, you'd be a laughingstock.

However impressive he is in person, and he can be very, very impressive, no matter how attractive his book is, you can't handle him honestly except in the way I do not think you would consider and I certainly am not suggesting, with you as Mack Sennett.

On the Tuesday after Jim agreed to drop his incitation to his own disbarment he had a number of us to lunch at the MOAC. He asked me what I suggested about Boxley. I suggested that he invite Boxley to return and sit down and talk with us. Boxley refused and that was it.

Boxley had a collaborator, Joel Palmer, who had just rented a house in New Orleans and was supposedly to write a book. He fled as soon as he learned of my report on the nonsense that he also was interested in, I don't know how or why. I mean fled! He was there one day and entirely gone the next.

The book abounds in things like these. That is why I suggest that you ask Wrone to xerox it for you. (One for me, too, please ask him. and I'll confirm that it is with my OK with a copy of this to him. Prof. history, Univ. Wisconsin, Stevens Point WI. Home address 1518 Blackberry Lane.

Garrison is even an unabashed literary thief. I close, at least I intend to close, with a story that may amuse you.

He had asked me to visit him in his den when he was preparing a speech he was to deliver in LA to a press-association convention. Jim really believed there had been a big-shot sado-masochist ring in his conspiracy and he had some of the strangest and least dependable people working on that until I broke it up. He also believed that Johnson was homosexual. Thus he was much taken with a line I think I recall accurately from page 9 of Photographic Whitewash. Understand, I don't mind his taking it. I think it is funny.

Only after he got to one word in it he broke up. He also could not remember my words, which surprised me, and he string it out and killed the effect of most of what he was intending to say. After he'd made a few fumbles and was a little abashed - he is the most articulate of men - I asked him if he had the book, he said he'd not be without it, handed it to me, and speaking, remember of suspicions that Johnson was involved in the assassination, I'd written, I read

"No matter how pure his motive, no matter how humble his gathering of fagots (if it is humble he is) they stoke a witch's cauldron and he is thought Macbeth."

Without a trace of blush or embarrassment, Jim said merely, "I thought I read it somewhere." But he still fluffed that line at that convention dinner!

Please accept my apologies for my typing and correcting. My vision also is impaired and I confabulate so I may not catch all the typos. I won't be able to get this in the mail now that there is none leaving Frederick Saturdays until Monday but I do hope it reaches you and that you do give this some thought. and that whatever you decide, it turns out to be the best.

Sincerely, Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

After writing this several things came to mind. One is that all of the opposition he imagined did nothing at all to impede him and had it tried it could not have begun to do him the harm he did to himself. He had nothing, he was onto nothing, and there was no need for the federal spookeries to try to do anything to him. Secretly, they did keep up with what he was saying. They did not and did not have to call in the witnesses to whom he spoke because they were witnesses to nothing at all.

Boxley, for example, was not a CIA plant. He was Garrison's creature, doing what he understood Garrison wanted him to do.

Essentially, you will be making a hero of a man who with a great opportunity was, save for the effectiveness of his mouth, a dismal failure. You will be misleading the country all over again and you will be making those inside the government who also failed look better, especially inside the government, because it will be easy, as I've seen in many FBI records, to pick and chose effective criticisms and then distrbute them. See, they say, we were right, we did our jobs, and this criticism is baselsss and false, as it is, and they attach proofs.

There is a vast difference between whether or not there was a conspiracy, as without question there was, and who conspired. I think I've kept up with most if not all the published whodunit theories. Some have been made attractive but not a single one is supported by anything that can be called evidence and all are unproven. Can't be proven. Some of their authors, like Garrison, convince themselves and then, sincere believers, convince others. The one that got most attention is and was known to its author to be completely impossible. He is still profiting from it, still propagandizing it, and little could do more to bury truth deeper.

One of the reports that reached me, from the late Greg Stone and from others to whom he spoke, is that you sought to buy the rights to the late Sylvia Meagher's book. We all wondered why for the same reason, what need is there to buy the rights to what essentially is public domain. I think we all wondered whether this was only so you could trade on her name. There is another incongruity: she was the only leading critic to condemn Garrison as publicly and as often as she could. She even gave a defense contribution to a man he had charged. All those criticisms, if you intended using criticisms of Garrison, are public domain. I am not suggesting that this is the pressure that led Greg Stone to kill himself but as you probably know, he did.

This is a subject that is not going to die. It also is a subject that forever will be studied by people who care and by historians. All of us who in any way have had anything to do with it. Some named now glorified, will as they should be, thoroughly condemned. We are none of us Merlins, who can remember the future. but I think the future will condemn the major media, which failed at that time of great crises and ever since then, and it will also condemn those who did the dirty work of making errant government look persecuted and clean when the truth is the exact opposite. Baseless and unjustified criticism exculpates ~~cleans~~ errant and guilty officialdom.

If he had not had grandiose illusions and ambitions, if he could have come close enough to earth to do what the Warren Commission did not do with its New Orleans witnesses, he could have put several in jail for perjury because they did swear falsely to what was material. All he had to do was call them before his own grand jury, repeat the questions and answers, and then show the available truth, a fair amount of which I had developed. Oswald had quite a history there he never touched on. Might have broken case open this way.

In the Albuquerque story I forgot what may amuse you. He asked me to go to the airport with him. He was driven by his security, two detectives, Lynn Loisel and Steve Bardelon. The Garrisonian concept of security was for the two protectors drop us off while both of them parked the car. When Jim and I got to the ticket desk, the six-foot-six-inch most prominent man in the city, always on TV and page one, said to the clerk. "You have a ticket for me. My name is Robert Levy."(I think it became Anderson in Albuquerque.)

When the four of us walked to the gate, the two dicks told us to wait while they went into the plane, I assumed to see if everything looked OK, they were all so afraid he'd be hurt. (Which was the very last thing the spookeries wanted, what he was doing was that much in their interests) "OK, boss," they said as they came out. And as soon as Jim was in the plane and out of sight they had a good laugh,"We fixed the boss up good," Loisel told me. "We told the hostess who he is and he'll get two steaks."

I attach the first page of one of the FBI's reports on this. After I spoke to the FBI it was possible to reach Harv Morgan. He had no objection to his name being used and it was then turned over to Loisel to handle and I went about my own work and interests.

I like these two and Ivon and regretted the loads they had to carry and the paranoia. On their difficulties and Jim's paranoia, he'd needed a hernia fixed for some time but with all the fine hospitals in New Orleans, he was actually afraid he'd be killed in any one of them. So, he searched around or had someone do that until a country clinic was located that could be emptied before he was admitted. He was the only patient when his hernia was fixed and he had these poor men guard him there around the clock, I think then a week or more.

If you should want to discuss any of this with me please do it so I can be in bed by six p.m. your time, as I should be. If you'd like, feel free to tape. 301/473-8186.